

# Naturalising The Normal (Lawler: 2014)

Ghurni Bhattacharya (UG-II)

*Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India*

## I. INTRODUCTION

“BAKI RAKHA KHAJNA/ MOTE BHALO KAJ NA “ ,”JE KORE KHONITE SROM/ JENO TARE DORE JOM “”ANAHARE NAHI KHED/ BESHI KHELE BARE MED ,”JAY JODI JAK PRAN /HIRAKER RAJA BHOGO BAN “(RAY,1980).We all are aware of the above mentioned phrases observed and vividly scripted by Satyajit ray in the film HIRAK Rajar Deshe where we find there are certain praising phrases about the way the reign is continuing in HIRAK RAJYO and those who stood against such above mentioned praising phrases were forced to push into “JANTAR MANTAR GHAR” where the “identified “ person’s thought process is steered and geared up absolutely so that the person loses his autonomy and just become a mere puppet losing his possession of voice .This reference of film or particularly the concept of JANTARMANTAR GHAR is what is intertwined with our daily lives and we being a part of, this vicious cycle, suffering from global epidemic of sameness is unrecognized ,thus becomes the part and parcel of our everyday life activities and this “JANTAR MANTAR GHAR “steers our every step even today in its most practical instances .To be precise this global epidemic of sameness is nothing but recognizing the fact that we live in a world which already has a meaning associated and prescribed to it which is described in the works of phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl’s concept of LIFE-WORLD (Husserl:1936) or Alfred Schutz concept of STOCK KNOWLEDGE AT HAND and SOCIAL RECIPES inherited and transmitted down generation after generation with the help of the process of Socialisation and maintenance of it is expected by all its active members thereby maintenance of social order and stability which is of macro orientation , hence it can be said that we are living in a world where differences are not celebrated.This paper aims to focus on several aspects of “our” (ie instilled by society) daily life activities which is affecting the lives of the “DIFFERENTS” making rooms for creating their own modified self as well as creating our own self by visualizing as society instructs us to do . According to the viewpoint of Erving Goffman ,(A symbolic Interactionist and a spiritual existentialist finds that the concept of “SELF “ is neither out there nor intrinsic to” MYSELF “ but it is “Produced “described in all of his works “PRESENTATION OF SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE “,”TOTAL INSTITUTIONS “”STIGMA “.(Lemert & Branaman:1997) Thus Self is created through action or performances and often emerges in constrained situation or at the junction of ABNORMAL CONDITION and NORMAL CONDITION (Lemert&Branaman:1997) .In this paper how society and its several institutions probes to “NATURALISE THE

NORMAL “,”NORMAL” as in expected or desirable is vividly depicted and how societies rules and regulations plays a pivotal role in identity formation or creation of self and identity politics, highlighting upon the fact that how social oppression faced by the labeled “DIFFERENTS” such as “DISABLED” people , social stratification and oppression faced in terms of urban rural disparities ,language ,race ,caste ,class and societal expectation of gender roles and gender stereotypes contributes to creation of one’s own self by modifying it within the darks walls of JANTAR MANTAR which is actually the SOCIETY and US being a part of it ,THE ACTUAL TOTAL INSTITUTION taking reference to the film and practical instances of everyday life .

## II. BODY

Erving Goffman being a Symbolic Interactionist and a spiritual abstractionist and existentialist focuses on the concept of creation of self which according to him is something not out there but he highlights upon the fact that the concept of self is actually a social product as the nature of the SELF is PRODUCED out of the consequence of the performances performed by the actor where he talked about two stages while performing in theatrical stage :a) FRONT STAGE which is actually the stage where performers perform playing a particular role which is validated by the audience with the proper use of props setting ,light background etc and successful implementation of impression management whereas the backstage being the preparatory more casual sphere is not revealed to the audience which is actually the dramaturgical analysis vividly depicted in his work “Presentation of Self In Everyday life “(Goffman:1956) and which is actually applicable to present condition as whatever we think of ourselves as “OUR” which is very “personal “ ,very intrinsic to ourselves is not actually the scenario as we all are strictly guided by society .The every step ,decision that we think that we decide to take is guided by society though we are often not aware of this guidance and did not feel cohesion as we are a member of that particular society which provides us some sort of identity and structural guidelines which is expected to follow by us as Durkheimian concept of Society as a Social Fact (Durkheim:1895) rightfully argues that Society is sacred and therefore we should worship it by following its rules and conventions as Society is a Social Fact which is external to the individual ,cohesive as well as general and shared in nature .For instance implication of societal rule is evidenced everywhere in every practical instances by social institutions like education, religion, caste, class, status ,occupational sectors ,race and ethnicity ,gender roles etc .Every social institutions has some sort of patterned behaviors as Simmel tends to see Sociation and following which is the

normative viz following traffic rules to maintain social order and solidarity for smooth running of transportation or following school rules and etiquettes is what expected by students which are actually performances conducted by us which becomes part an parcel of everyday routine internalized by ourselves through the process of trial and error methods accompanied by the process of socialization and there impression management takes place as the performances or following up certain customs to present oneself as the “fit” member of the society is what the concept of maintenance of social order interlinked with Goffman’s IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT which provides the ground for discussion of NATURALISING THE NORMAL .

This concept of IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT or the hardcore belief of becoming a “FIT “member of the society or appropriately Charles Darwin’s terminology of SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST (Darwin:1869) provides the ground for societal dominance yielding a constant question of threat of being “socially acceptable “.Human beings are suffering from the fear of being socially acceptable or just like the performers performance is validated by the audience where the performers success of playing a particular role is determined with criticality, simultaneously the fear of being socially acceptable is validated by the society and the craving for being socially acceptable leads to all sorts of actions and performances which is creating their new identities and new concepts of self and it is proven that what we think ,what we do is actually what society trains us to do by blurring our “own vision” which we think to be very personal and intrinsic to ourselves thus society being a social fact according to Emile Durkheim is actually a TOTAL INSTITUTION (Lemert&Branaman:1997) with all it’s Social Institutions being open or closed in nature acts a mirror instructing humans the appropriate modes to become socially acceptable and fit member of society which is discussed in practical instances of today’s world .Therefore Erving Goffman being a symbolic Interactionist and Spiritual abstractionist and existentialist believed in abstract reductionism put emphasis not only on Interactionist Micro perspective but also highlighted upon the implication and affects of structures in construction of self which is produced in relation to a structured closed social institution regarded as TOTAL INSTITUTION and he also differed from the concept of “Cogito Ergo Sum” transcribed version in Latin “I think therefore I am “by French Philosopher Rene Descartes which is mentioned in his book “Discourse on Method “(Descartes:1637).as well as Kafkas book of Metamorphosis (Kafka:1915) which deals with a human being who finds that he is an insect which is indicating material existence. Thereafter Society being the Jantar Mantar or total institution is actually the vicious cycle which modifies the notion of self as it acts as an absent camera both in our Back stages where thought process ,capabilities is prepared to be adjustable to society as the fear of social acceptability is intrinsic and made inevitable thus “PRIMARY ADJUSTMENT “becomes effectively prevalent and maintenance of cohesion is

effectively incorporated in other words and those who are normatively stigmatized and ostracized to be not the fit member of Society faces severe social prejudice ,oppression and discrimination which is evident in all spheres which is actually “NATURAL”. This Global epidemic of sameness and imposition of societal constraints by this Jantar Mantar system is actually making the base for origination of “modified Self” (Lemert & Branaman:1997) which is vividly comparable and favoured with the viewpoints of Roland Barthes who wrote in his essay of The Death of the Author (Barthes:1967) that as soon as the author lifts his or her pen up from his or her own creation of writing the author’s creativity is declared to be dead as that particular piece of writing is open to newer forms of interpretations and contestations accompanied by the viewpoint of Plato that existence of true knowledge is vague because as soon as human beings can make sense of true knowledge then the knowledge is not true anymore therefore true knowledge can only be understood in relation to making sense of the true knowledge ,(Plato:369BC)Similarly society being the total institution shreds off the person’s past experiences and identities and the reconstruction of identity indicates the modified self as the consequences of PRIMARY ADJUSTMENT and SECONDARY ADJUSTMENT which is also related to the concept of BACKSTAGE and FRONT STAGE of DRAMATURGICAL ANALYSIS vividly depicted in his work .Referring to French film Les 400 Coups or in other words The 400 Blows by Francois Truffaut who is a French film director created one of the amazing movies of French New Wave which clearly portrays imposition of stringent societal norms and customary values upon the protagonist Antoine Dionel who is a small boy suffering from existential crisis and was indifferent among his peer groups .The film starts with a class with a strict teacher instructing the pupils and an examination is going on as well as we also find students deviating norms inspite of what is expected to do in class when teacher faces the blackboard to write something but as Antoine Dionel was a marked student he got punishment each and everytime as he did not follow the customary conventions that society expects him to do simultaneously he suffers from existential crisis and in the entire film he was portrayed as wearing a black uniform symbolizing his intellect tending to be alienated from the general societal normative and it was also described that his familial background was quite disturbed as his mother is engaged in an extramarital affair which is again inappropriate in terms of societal conventions and who are more focused on his grades rather than his personal preference hence his mother promised him to give Dionel an exciting gift if he could write good essay in French essay writing test and manage to get good marks where Dionel inspired by an existentialist Balzac wrote Balzac’s thought got poor marks were forced by his parents not to save the picture of Balzac from burning in the fire which was put up in a candle as an emblem of respect by Dionel highlighting upon the issue that there is no room for individual preference but dominance of societal expectations and fear of being socially acceptable just by getting good marks only lasts .which not only affects

the front stage or impression management phase where he faces continuous oppressions both physically and orally but also affects his backstage where he first tries to get good marks in French essay writing class test by reading Balzac and he often tried to analyse harsh words thrown away at him by his teachers in front of mirror hence not able to cope up with this situation severe times he tried to escape from this vicious cycle of “Jantar Mantar “ or the fair that he had visited by fleeing from schools ,homes etc and going to friends place and fair .Inspite of several attempts of “Normalising “ Dionel his parents sought help from boarding school where the chiming of the bell shot indicates stringency and strictness which attempted to normalize him by stripping his past experiences off and the interview session indicated all personal information was taken away from him and converted it into a file indicating the essence of “Modified Self” but the Secondary Adjustment of dionel calls for escape once again and hence in their “me time “(concept of free space ) (Lemert & Branaman:1997)it is observed that Dionel is able to escape from the clutches of the institution but the last long Tracking shot of the film where Dionel runs crossing several roads and ultimately meets a sea and with the turning around of Dionel with his Zooming face the film ends in an unexpected manner telling the audience the search for escape from clutches of societal norms and expected roles is neverending but meaningless though in this entire process of normalizing and escaping the camera is actually portrayed as the only companion of Dionel as it moves along with him and the entire film is not shot as point of dominance of camera techniques but the other camera which captures the activity of that camera and shot being the silent observer guides and directs this entire film just as the society being silent observer guides our ways of lives just like CCTV surveillance in present times presented in Chronicle of a Summer by Jean Rouch (Rouch:1961) thus in this entire film society is actually playing the role of total institution which force Dionel to incorporate primary adjustment a well as secondary adjustment which comes in relation to the societal structure and not intrinsic to ones own self as this escapist tendency comes only in relation to the opposition against social and expected normative and constant search for alternative is evidenced to be meaningless .

But to analyse societal normative it often tends to visualize and guide in one way direction thus categories being different or segregated from the normative faces societal oppression and discrimination in all fields and this oppression and subjugation against the labeled different indicates that human beings are living in the world of pattern recognition which does not celebrate the world of differences thus fear of social acceptance lasts .All of our mobile screen contains patterns or passwords or face detection facilities without the perfect match the cellphone does not reopens and this constant search of perfect match has been instilled into our mind from the very childhood of our general knowledge science books portraying the ideal bodily structure or framework consisting of two hands two legs and this ideal typical feature is so

integral to our thought process so that we treat people suffering from physical impairments which is more “disabling” being a societal construction in terms of special education thereby segregating the child from the mainstream providing the room for modified self resulting lower occupational roles intertwined with poverty and social oppression and mention should be made of physical disability as discussion on autism or mental health disability still embedded in darkness, accompanied by the notion of body shaming in spheres of advertisements and even in petty conversations and memes of social media also signifies the world of pattern recognition and this notion of “accepted” and “unaccepted” viewpoints which has a severe implication in our diet chart impacting the front stage Apart from that holding a lower caste not only brags stigmatization but DEATH as society tends to think that these categories are out of the box accompanied by rural urban disparities as we often say particular way of dressing style in urban city and particular way of pronunciation as “gaiya ,”and like “Coming from Village” highlighting upon the poor condition in which the rural community people devoid of basic necessities and amenities of life which is not so normal or standarised according to “urban” culture thus broadening the horizon of segregation applying in terms of ethnicity as well .Hence as we discussed in the introduction part society being a mirror reflecting what to do and what not to do is vividly described in all of these instances which particularly focuses on the concept of naturalising the normal ie dominance of societal viewpoints as this negligence of social rejection creates a low esteemed identity which creates the notion of self in the junction of abnormal situation and normal situation(Lemert% Branaman:1997) and the constant efforts of rehabilitating them to make them the fit members of society is modifying their identity of self, escape from which is a myth vividly depicted in the above mentioned film The 400 Blows(Truffaut:1959), as society being sacred is superior which can be only understood in relation to the inferior as both concepts have to be understood in terms of a particular framework which provides the ideal type as Emile Durkheim in his book “The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life” says the concept of “supernatural” can only be understood if we know what “natural” (Durkheim:1912)is therefore the concept of frame of Erving Goffman can be applicable in this instance .(Adams&Sydie:2001)Daily intrinsic aspects such as gender roles also indicates several roles and expectations of society ascribed to our gender identities such as girls are meant to be passive and caregiver and phrases such as boys don’t cry This roles and expectation of society is daily performed by ourselves unnoticingly as it is a habitual phenomenon which tends to the fact of naturalising the normal which ties us up in the global epidemic of sameness and the vicious cycle of jantarmantar revolving our thought process by reviving he fear of social acceptance.



### III. CONCLUSION

The full form of internet is inter-connected network which is actually the web wellknitted by the fear of social acceptance as one of scribble story posts tell that after a certain point of time he felt alive as the internet is working again highlighting upon the fact that we feel isolated without the world of internet and social media which continuously tell us to accept certain trends such as prisma doing tiktok videos unnoticingly or certain ways to become more presentable such as sharing whatsapp status or updating facebook story can be sited as example accompanied by incorporation of certain filters in instagram to become more beautiful with a glowing effect indicating a racist undertone associated to it which is also effecting market economy with the increasing sell of fairness beauty products and this social acceptance makes us feel alive when the green light is visible In our facebook chat as it is integral and gives a community feeling , identity of instagrammer, youtuber is more validated rather than name viz Bong Guy. Therefore “Naturalising the normal “is a symbol which is again vividly depicted in another Italian Neorealist film Bicycle thieves (De Sica:1948) where at the end of the film it is found in order to attain the upward social mobility and being socially acceptable to earn livelihood the protagonist has to steal the bicycle where having a bicycle is a representation of upward social mobility also Robert K Merton’s Labelling theory of deviance suggests that how criminality is labeled to an individual in terms of their looks ,behavior or association which is also effecting their past self and stresses on implication of modified self in correctional homes thus all these instances highlights upon the fact of societal imposition acting as vicious cycle being total institution is integral to ourself which often leads to the primary adjustment and secondary adjustment and out of its relation impacting both the front stage that is impression management phase by following the social recipes and trends as well as the backstage that is the steering up our thought process with the fear of social accessibility and escape from which is absolutely a myth implying upon the fact that self is actually produced with modification if not acceptable or validated which can be realized under a particular umbrella of framework emphasizing on realization of the notion of self as a social product as it comes in relation to broader societal structures is evidenced in all practical instances and film which is a representation of society in today’s contemporary world .

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